

## Message Text

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42

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 1593

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS RH ZA

SUBJECT: RHODESIA: SITHOLE'S VIEWS ON VICTORIA FALLS MEETING

1. IN 40-MINUTE CONVERSATION AT RESIDENCE AUG 21, REV. NDABANINGI SITHOLE TOLD ME HE IS "LOOKING AT UPCOMING VICTORIA BRIDGE MEETING BETWEEN SMITH AND ANC NOT HE INSISTED AS PESSIMIST (AS HE IS SO OFTEN ACCUSED), BUT AS HARD-HEADED REALIST. WHILE SITHOLE CONTENDS THAT POSITIONS OF SMITH AND ANC ARE "IRRECONCILABLE", I DETECTED A FAINT HOPE THAT THE TABLING OF RESPECTIVE POSITIONS ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES COULD BRING ABOUT (AS SITHOLE SAID) A BETTER APPRECIATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF EACH SIDES' DESIRES, OBJECTIVES AND CONDITIONS. WHAT FOLLOWS NEXT, SITHOLE SAID, WOULD DEPEND UPON ATTITUDES STRUCK AND FLEXIBILITY SHOWN AS A RESULT OF EACH SIDE HAVING A FIRST CHANCE TO LAY OUT ITS SUBSTANTIVE CASE FULLY. UP UNTIL NOW, SITHOLE POINTED OUT, SMITH AND ANC HAVE CONCENTRATED ONLY ON PROCEDURAL NOT SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES.

2. WHEN WE SAY WE WANT MAJORITY RULE NOW THAT DOES NOT MEAN TOMORROW; SITHOLE EXPLAINED IT ALLOWS FOR A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS WHICH, HE NOTED, WAS "MORE GENEROUS" THAN MOZAMBIQUE WHOSE TRANSITION EXTENDED OVER 9 MONTHS.

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3. WHILE HE DID NOT SAY SO, I SENSED SITHOLE AND OTHER ANC NATIONALISTS MAY BE RELIEVED THAT SMITH'S SIX-MAN DELEGATION WILL NOT INCLUDE SUCH HARD-LINERS AS LARDNER BURKE, MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND LAW AND ORDER, OR VAN DER BYL, MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. SITHOLE SAID HE JUST INFORMED BY RHODESIAN SOURCES THAT LARDNER BURKE WENT THREE WEEKS AGO TO ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF IN AN EFFORT TO GAIN SUPPORT TO UNSEAT SMITH AND STAND FIRM AGAINST MAJORITY RULE. THE CHIEF OF THE RHODESIAN ARMY REPORTEDLY TURNED LARDNER BURKE DOWN FLAT. SITHOLE ALSO REPORTED THAT ON AUG 20 SMITH ASSEMBLED HIS CLOSEST ADVISORS TO SAY HE HAD DECIDED TO GO ALONG WITH MAJORITY RULE IN PRINCIPLE AT THE BRIDGE MEETING BUT IT WAS A QUESTION OF "WHEN". SMITH WAS NOW THINKING IN TERMS OF 3-5 YEARS. SITHOLE SAID THIS WOULD BE ENTIRELY UNACCEPTABLE TO THE ANC WHICH WILL INSIST ON "NOW" WITH A REASONABLE TRANSITION PERIOD.

4. SITHOLE HAS BEEN TROUBLED WITH THE PHRASE "EVENTUAL MAJORITY RULE" WHICH WAS USED IN THE STATEMENT WHICH ASST SECY DAVIS MADE JULY 10 BEFORE THE SENATE SUB-COMMITTEE ON AFRICA; SITHOLE FELT THIS PHRASE TENDED TO SUPPORT SMITH'S POSITION. (LUSAKA A-63). I POINTED OUT THAT USG HAD NO POSITION ON TIME FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF MAJORITY RULE; THIS WAS A QUESTION FOR PRINCIPALS TO DECIDE IN ANY NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT WHICH WE SUPPORTED OVER A VIOLENT SOLUTION IN RHODESIA. SAID I PERSONALLY ASSUMED WORD "EVENTUAL" USED TO ALLOW FOR SOME TRANSITIONAL PERIOD FOR ORDERLY TRANSFER OF POWER. (COMMENT: WOULD APPRECIATE DEPT CLARIFICATION OF THIS POINT SO THAT EXPLANATION CAN BE GIVEN SITHOLE TO ALLAY ANY LINGERING DOUBTS IN ANC REACTION TO US POSITION.)

5. SITHOLE SAID ANC HAD INFORMATION THAT SMITH HAD TWO MAIN OBJECTIVES AT VICTORIA FALLS: GAIN ANC SUPPORT FOR MAJORITY RULE IN PRINCIPLE; AND AGREEMENT ON CEASEFIRE. SITHOLE SAID ANC WILL OPPOSE AS UNSATISFACTORY. THERE WILL BE NO CEASEFIRE UNLESS THERE IS MAJORITY RULE NOW.

6. I GAVE SITHOLE SEVERAL RECENT COPIES OF INTERNATIONAL EDITION OF HERALD TRIBUNE FEATURING FRONT-PAGE STORIES AND CONFIDENTIAL

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EDITORIALS ON RHODESIA AND ILLUSTRATING ATTENTION AND CONCERN IN US FOR PEACEFUL, NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. INDICATED ANC HAS SYMPATHY OF US PUBLIC WHICH SUPPORTS SELF-DETERMINATION AND MAJORITY RULE. EXPRESSED PERSONAL VIEW THAT WHILE ANC MIGHT NOT BE WILLING TO CONCEDE ON CEASEFIRE AT BRIDGE MEETING, IT WOULD PROBABLY BE ILL-ADVISED TO UNDERTAKE ANY GUERRILLA ENGAGEMENTS WHICH COULD UNDERMINE THE FAVOR AND SYMPATHY IT NOW ENJOYS WITH US AND WEST.

7. IN REPLY TO MY QUESTION ON ANC UNITY, SITHOLE  
CONFIDENTLY ASSURED ME IT WAS IN GOOD SHAPE. HE  
THOUGHT CHAIRMANSHIP OF BRIDGE MEETING WOULD EASILY  
FOLLOW PATTERN OF PREVIOUS SMITH-MUZOREWA MEETINGS  
WITH SMITH OPENING AND MUZOREWA REPLYING, I.E.,  
ALTERNATING CHAIRMANSHIP.

8. IF IMPRESSION OF REALISM AND MODERATION WHICH SITHOLE  
CONVEYED IN OUR CONVERSATION IS GENUINE AND SUSTAINED,  
THEN THERE MAY BE MORE HOPE FOR SOME PROGRESS AT BRIDGE  
MEETING THAN IMPLIED BY EARLIER REPORTS THAT SITHOLE  
AND OTHER ANC MILITANTS REGARD MEETING AS EXERCISE  
IN FUTILITY.  
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